

Oursler takes Grand Island experience to Robert Morris

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By Aaron Mansfield

Cassie Oursler saw firsthand what it takes to become a Division I basketball player. During her first three years on the **Grand Island** girls squad, she played alongside Rhode Island guard Kallie Banker.

"She's a Division I player, and she had that intensity," Oursler said. "I learned a lot from her, how hard of a worker she was."

Now Oursler has reached the same level as Banker, as she prepares for her freshman season with Robert Morris University. Oursler, the 2012-13 Buffalo News Player of the Year, has spent this week on the campus of the suburban Pittsburgh, Pa., institution. She chatted with The News on the phone today.

"When I visited the team, everyone was very welcoming and the campus is beautiful," said Oursler, who will come back to Grand Island Saturday and move into her dorm at RMU at the end of August. "It's the perfect size. The coaches are awesome. The trainers are the coolest people ever. Everything just seemed to fit perfectly in what I wanted."

As for Oursler's training?

"A bunch of crazy stuff, but I enjoy it," she said.

She has been lifting weights for an hour every day in addition to doing agility work and running stadium stairs. Oursler has gotten a chance to get acquainted with her new teammates this week, and she hasn't been disappointed.

"They're so motivational," she said. "We all push each other. Everyone is happy and there's no negativity. I have teammates from different countries, so I've learned a lot about where they're from. They're all just really great people."

Oursler is not taking summer classes because she said Grand Island's graduation date was too late, and she also isn't working this summer, so she's focusing just about all her time on working out.

This past season, Oursler averaged 22.5 points, 13.8 rebounds, and 3.1 blocks per game. Her squad fell in the Far West Regionals. The first-team All-WNY performer is far from complacent with her overall game.

"I have to get a lot stronger," she said. "High school basketball is going to be completely different from college basketball, so I'm definitely working on my strength, and then getting better at shooting — not far out, but having a better shot for my inside game. I'm working on speed and agility, too. Everything can always get better."

Oursler, who is 6-foot-4, plans on continuing to play center in college, though she expects to get some looks at power forward, too. The Colonials return eight of their 11 players from last year's 7-22 squad, though their starting center graduated. Their coach may be familiar to some in Western New York. Sal Buscaglia was the UB women's coach from 1990-98.

